

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Why are genetically modified foods a threat, rather than a boost to our food supply?

Independent studies have found that U.S. farmers growing GE crops are using just as many pesticides and herbicides as conventional farmers, and in some cases are using more. GE crops designed to be herbicide-resistant or to produce their own pesticide (such as Bt) creates pests and weeds that are herbicide- or pesticide-resistant, which will inevitably lead to the use of more toxic chemicals to eliminate these pests. In addition, genetically-altered pollen from GE crops has begun to contaminate adjoining fields, polluting the DNA of crops of organic and non-GE farmers. Large-scale consumption of GE foods raises several unprecedented human health risks such as toxicity, allergic reactions, immunosuppression, and antibiotic resistance.

Are organic foods safer to eat than conventional foods?

According to the FDA, at least 53 pesticides classified as carcinogenic are presently applied in massive amounts to our major food crops. According to a Consumers Union report, 73 percent of conventionally grown foods had residue from at least one pesticide and were six times as likely as organic to contain multiple pesticide residues.

Why is it important to buy locally-grown foods?

Between 1987 and 1992, America lost an average of 32,500 farms per year, about 80 percent of which were family run. At the same time, our food supply is being controlled by fewer and fewer corporations. By buying foods grown locally, we are supporting regional growers in our area, and keeping our dollars in the local economy. In addition, with our food traveling an average of 1,300 miles from the farm to our plates, buying locally grown foods reduces energy costs associated with food transport and provides us with fresher produce that is closer to ripeness.

Why are organic foods more expensive than conventional foods?

Conventional food prices don't reflect the hidden costs borne by taxpayers, including billions of dollars in federal subsidies to large corporate farms, cleanup of our water, soil, and air from pesticide and fertilizer use, and other environmental damage and social costs. Organic foods purchased directly from the farmer – at farmer's markets or through community supported agriculture (CSA) farms – are often about the same price as conventionally grown produce from the supermarket.



How will the USDA's national organic standards affect organic farms in California when they are implemented this fall?

The USDA's national organic standards will be less restrictive than the current California organic standards. As a result, a greater number of large, corporate farms will qualify for the organic label, potentially pushing out the smaller organic farms in California that have been using organic practices for decades. The national rule may allow the use of currently unacceptable pesticides and additives to become accepted as "organic." It also may allow practices that are inhumane to animals.

Can organic agriculture feed the world?

Organic farms come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from 2 to 2,000 acres or more. Large organic farms can supply staple crops such as corn and wheat, while small farms scattered across the world can supply fruits and vegetables regionally. In fact, the smallest farms – those of 27 acres or less – are more than ten times more productive than large farms (6,000 acres or more), and small farms of 4 acres or less can be over a hundred times more productive.

Why shouldn't we irradiate foods to protect ourselves against food-borne illnesses?

More than a third of published scientific studies on irradiated foods raise questions about their safety. Most alarming is the fact that research has found a variety of mutagens and carcinogens in foods zapped by levels of radiation permitted under current federal regulations. These mutagens and carcinogens are not present in foods that have not been irradiated. The best way to prevent food-borne illness is to ensure that foods are grown, stored, and processed under sanitary conditions.